In the Claims:

Claims 1-15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (currently amended): A method of enhancing an installed speech coding system that has been in use for encoding a speech signal including a plurality of speech signal frames, said installed speech coding system including a plurality of installed speech encoders, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a rate determinator module;

connecting said rate determinator module to said installed speech coding system;

receiving said plurality of speech signal frames by said rate determinator;

determining a data rate of one of said speech signal frames by said rate determinator;

selecting one of said installed plurality of speech encoders according to said data rate on a frame-by-frame basis, said installed plurality of speech encoders including at least a first encoder using a first speech encoding scheme and a second encoder using a second speech encoding scheme, wherein said second speech encoding scheme belongs to a different speech coding standard than ~~from~~ said first speech encoding scheme~~, wherein said first encoder is a fixed bit-rate encoder incapable of rate determination~~; and

encoding said one of said speech signal frames using said one of said plurality of speech encoders on the frame-by-frame basis;

wherein said determining, selecting and encoding steps are repeated so as to encode said speech signal on the frame-by-frame basis.

Claim 17 (original): The method of claim 16, wherein each of said frames contains about 10 ms of speech signal.

Claim 18 (original): The method of claim 16, wherein said data signal includes a first frame and a second frame, and wherein said first frame is encoded using said first encoder and said second frame is encoded using said second encoder.

Claim 19 (original): The method of claim 16, wherein said data signal is a single frame of an active speech signal.

Claim 20 (original): The method of claim 16, wherein said plurality of said speech encoders include G.729 ITU compliant speech encoders of 0, 1.5, 6.4, 8.0 and 11.2 kbps data rates.

Claim 21 (original): The method of claim 16, wherein said plurality of said speech encoders include G.729 ITU compliant speech encoders of 0, 8.0 and 11.2 kbps data rates and G.726 ITU compliant speech encoders of 24.0 and 40.0 kbps data rates.

Claim 22 (currently amended): A method of enhancing an installed speech coding system that has been in use for encoding a speech signal including a plurality of speech signal frames, said installed speech coding system including a plurality of installed speech encoders, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a rate determinator module;

connecting said rate determinator module to said installed speech coding system;

receiving said plurality of speech signal frames by said rate determinator;

choosing, according to a predetermined factor, one group from a plurality of groups of installed speech encoders, said chosen group of installed speech encoders including at least a first encoder using a first speech encoding scheme and a second encoder using a second speech encoding scheme, wherein said second speech encoding scheme belongs to a different speech

coding standard than ~~from~~ said first speech encoding scheme~~, wherein said first encoder is a fixed bit rate encoder incapable of rate determination~~;

determining a data rate of one of said speech signal frames;

selecting, according to said data rate, one of said plurality of installed speech encoders in said chosen group on a frame-by-frame basis; and

encoding said one of said speech signal frames using said selected speech encoder on the frame-by-frame basis;

wherein said determining, selecting and encoding steps are repeated so as to encode said speech signal on the frame-by-frame basis.

Claim 23 (original): The method of claim 22, wherein said plurality of said speech encoders include G.729 ITU compliant speech encoders of 0, 1.5, 6.4, 8.0 and 11.2 kbps data rates.

Claim 24 (original): The method of claim 22, wherein said plurality of said speech encoders include G.729 ITU compliant speech encoders of 0, 8.0 and 11.2 kbps data rates and G.723.1 ITU compliant speech encoders of 5.3 and 6.4 kbps data rates.

Claim 25 (original): The method of claim 22, wherein said network controller is capable of selecting two or more speech encoder groups, wherein each of said groups includes at least one of said speech encoders and one of said groups includes at least two of said speech encoders.

Claim 26 (original): The method of claim 25, wherein said speech encoder groups are mutually exclusive.

Claim 27 (original): The method of claim 25, wherein one of said groups includes G.729 ITU compliant speech encoders of 0, 1.5, 8.0 kbps and another one of said groups includes G.721 compliant speech encoder of 32 kbps.

Claims 28-44 (canceled)

Claim 45 (previously presented): The method of claim 16, wherein said first speech encoder is based on G.729 at 11.2 kbps and said second speech encoder is based on G.723.1 at 6.4 kbps.

Claims 46-47 (canceled)

Claim 48 (previously presented): The method of claim 16, wherein said determining said date rate is based on a speech classification of said frame.

Claim 49 (previously presented): The method of claim 22, wherein said determining said date rate is based on a speech classification of said frame.

Claims 50-68 (canceled)

Claim 69 (new): The method of claim 16, wherein said first encoder is a fixed bit-rate encoder incapable of rate determination.

Claim 70 (new): The method of claim 16, wherein said first encoder is a G.721 ITU compliant speech encoder and said second encoder is a G.723.1 ITU compliant speech encoder.

Claim 71 (new): The method of claim 22, wherein said first encoder is a fixed bit-rate encoder incapable of rate determination

Claim 72 (new): The method of claim 22, wherein said first encoder is a G.721 ITU compliant speech encoder and said second encoder is a G.723.1 ITU compliant speech encoder.